

December 7, 2005

Dear FCC,

This is my story with Ultratec's CapTel telephone, which would be enabled nationwide with approval of docket 03-123. I am sending it to you to show how CapTel has improved the quality of my life since I have gotten it. If docket 03-123 is passed, this can be the same story for hundreds more deaf and hard of hearing individuals. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Ultratec's CapTel has improved the quality of my life in a much greater capacity than I could have imagined. While I was excited to hear there was a phone out that "captioned" the words of the speaker, I did not anticipate how heavily I would come to rely on CapTel's service.

I have only used the CapTel at home, deciding to "try it out" there before I gave it a shot in the workplace. Being a severely hard of hearing person, I rely mainly on lip-reading to get through my days. Needless to say, the telephone has always been my greatest nemesis in the world of communication. Before I embark on how wonderful I think the CapTel is, I want to make it clear how much the telephone has been my Achilles' heel. For many years, my brothers and I have always hated the telephone. Personally, I have experimented with countless different phones with volume adjustments, tone adjustments, different telecoil settings on my hearing aids, and the end result was always the same. A feeling of helplessness and inferiority. In the past I am ashamed to say I have even "given up" on conversations, pretending to understand, hanging up, and not knowing for sure what was said. The telephone has always made my disability more glaring than any other experience, even leaving me sick to my stomach at times.

Without a doubt, the CapTel has had the greatest positive impact on my hearing life since I was given hearing aids as a child. Using the CapTel has increased my "independence" in this world by leaps and bounds. In the past, I have always had to ask my family to listen, and in a sense, translate for me when I made various phone calls. Now I live on my own, a decision influenced in part by the confidence CapTel gives me. I can make calls to my bank, to my doctors, even to friends talking on scratchy cell phones with confidence that the conversation will not be a series of embarrassing "what?"s. I will never "give up" on a conversation again. Often, when I receive a call and cannot hear the person, I ask to call them back, and using caller id, I simply call them back on my CapTel phone and in a sense, my spirit soars. The unique set up the CapTel with a "behind the scenes" translator also allows me to not feel completely codependent on the transcription. Like captioning on the television, I can make an effort to "hear" the words on my own, and look to the caption if I miss them. With practice, I have learned to use the CapTel to turn my telephone conversations into near "normal" ones.

I cannot explain how great I think the CapTel is. Not providing the services of CapTel to all states would be a huge step backwards in the progress of technology and innovative ideas to improve the quality of life for hearing impaired people in this country. Please let me know if there is anything I can do, letters I can write, phone calls I can make (!), to anyone, to try to broaden the CapTel range as a service to myself and other hard of hearing people.

Kind Regards,

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